



March 25, 2011

To: Sen. Ryan Zinke, Senate Education and Cultural Resources Committee, Chair
Sen. Rick Ripley, Senate Education and Cultural Resources Committee, Vice Chair
Sen. Bob Hawks, Senate Education and Cultural Resources Committee, Vice Chair
All Members, Senate Education and Cultural Resources Committee

RE: Please support SJ 19 – A resolution encouraging “Farm to School” programs in Montana.

Dear Committee Members,

In 2005 the Missoula County Public Schools began purchasing food directly from area farmers and educating students about healthy food choices and the values of local agriculture. Today, schools across Montana – from Bozeman to Glendive and Fairfield to Whitefish – are pursuing similar *Farm to School* programs. *Farm to School* connects schools (K-12) and local farms and ranches in order to serve healthy Montana grown foods in school cafeterias and provide experiential agriculture, health, and nutrition education opportunities for students.

Montana’s schools are taking the initiative in developing *Farm to School* programs because the benefits are clear: These programs support children’s health by combating childhood obesity and associated diseases with increased consumption of nutritious fruits and vegetables. *Farm to School* facilitates experiential education about food and nutrition and helps students understand why local agriculture is important, and at the same time, provides a stable market for local farmers and ranchers. *Farm to School* brings economic development opportunities to Montana’s agricultural communities.

Grow Montana, a coalition of organizations working toward a sustainable Montana-based food system, has developed SJ 19 – a resolution encouraging *Farm to School* programs in Montana. This resolution is a mechanism for recognizing *Farm to School* as an effective strategy for combating childhood obesity, improving child health, and local economic development, and encourages Montana’s schools, parent groups, and state agencies, to support these programs. This resolution recognizes the first week of October as *Montana Farm to School Week*, and prompts Montanans to engage in promotional activities that bring further visibility and development to these programs. A state designation of *Montana Farm to School Week* can give authority to schools and school boards, parent and citizen groups, and state agencies to spend time supporting *Farm to School*.

The benefits of *Farm to School* are broad, and help our children, our farmers, and our communities. **Support for *Farm to School* is equally broad, and the entities listed on the following page encourage your support of SJ 19 – a resolution promoting *Farm to School* programs in Montana.**

Sincerely,

Kevin Moore
Grow Montana Coordinator

The following entities urge you to vote YES on SJ 19 – a resolution encouraging *Farm to School* programs in Montana.

- **Montana Food Bank Network**
- **Montana Food Security Council**
- **Montana Dietetics Association**
- **Montana Food System Council**
- **Sleeping Giants Citizen Council**

- **Northern Plains Resource Council**
- **Farm Hands**
- **Nourish the Flathead**
- **Community Food & Agriculture Coalition**
- **Madison Farm to Fork**

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